

MONTHLY BULLETIN

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE

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MAY, 1933

SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND TRANSIENTS REPORTED ANNUALLY IN PENNA.

*Extracts from survey made for Department of Welfare by Morris Lewis
of the National Committee on Care of Transient and Homeless*

PENNSYLVANIA plays host to millions of visitors each year. Its 11,155 miles of railways and 90,867 miles of highways form three per cent and four and one-half per cent respectively of the nation's railroad and motoring facilities. Traffic to and from most points of national interest must pass somewhere within its borders.

In Pennsylvania during the course of a year, approximately 600,000 nights lodgings are furnished to transients who find it necessary to ask for food and lodging for which they cannot pay. Of this number at least 200,000 lodgings are provided to Penn-

sylvanians cut loose from their communities. All these transients added to the resident homeless, constitute a homeless population which calls for study and planning on a scale never before attempted. After three years of wandering in a fruitless effort to attain economic security, about two million today make up a migratory army never before contemplated in this country. Many of these two million have visited Pennsylvania. There is little hope that this aimless tramping will end in anything but tremendous loss in human values, broken homes, moral and physical deterioration. There is also the danger of developing a chronic transiency which will not diminish even when present conditions no longer are operative.

Experience has shown that the transient population corresponds in character and content with the resident group. It includes men and boys, women and girls and families. They present a fair cross-section of the problems faced by

most communities dealing with local people but carry the added difficulty of non-residence. They reflect the general uncertainties of our industrial conditions; the unrest caused by differences in the younger and older generations; the disturbance of family and economic roots; the newer phenomenon of women and girls now added to the

mobile population. The entire picture calls for changing concepts regarding treatment and for the extension of all our social machinery to this wandering group. It calls for a revision of settlement laws within and without the state. It calls for the integration of a tran-

sient program with general community planning.

Who Are They?

These men are starkly detached from all that subtle atmosphere which forms the unconscious background of our estimates of one another. This fact gives the circumstances of their social status an especial interest.

All sorts of people travel and they differ very little from our next door neighbors. In fact many are our next door neighbors. A study of sample groups in this and other states indicates that in this national vortex, a considerable proportion of native sons are milling around within their own state.

Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, the two largest cities in the state, located on the extreme eastern and western borders, receive a greater proportion of the non-residents. Pennsylvanians are

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STATE AND OUT-OF-STATE TRANSIENTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

	Out of State	Per Cent	State	Per Cent
Philadelphia	4488	84.2	844	15.8
Pittsburgh	14006	72.0	5467	28.0
Williamsport	59	59.0	41	41.0
Altoona	758	52.2	694	47.8

TRANSIENT AGE GROUPS

Age	Total Number Transients	Per Cent	U. S. Census for Pa. 1930
	24,805	100.0	100.0
Under 21	3510	14.1	13.5*
21-24	4521	18.2	11.8**
25-34	7882	31.8	21.0
Over 35	8892	35.9	53.7

*15-19

**20-24

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GERTRUDE MARVIN WILLIAMS *Editor*
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EDITORIAL

By Alice F. Liveright, *Secretary of Welfare*

ONE of man's most primitive customs is the care and protection of the wanderer. Coupled with this simple hospitality loomed the fear of the unknown. Both of these factors play a part in some of the pressing problems which have increased during the period of unemployment.

Our wanderers today are no longer the itinerant troubadours, peddlers or pioneers. Our wanderers today are the homeless, the dispossessed and the discouraged. They are to be found in every community from coast to coast, from north to south. Our primitive instinct may house them for the night, but our equally primitive fear rejects them as members of our communities.

This haphazard attitude must cease. Today the Nation as a whole is concerned with them. Local, State and Federal funds to a slight degree are being used for their care. The time has now come for concerted thinking, concerted planning and concerted action. Local plans must be made and an appeal for Federal legislation and Federal funds must follow.

Already Ohio and Illinois have determined how they shall care for the homeless and the transient. Pennsylvania with the assistance of the National Committee on Transients, through the Welfare Department, will before long complete its report on the magnitude of this problem and plans for the care of these hundreds of thousands will be formulated.

We look to every one of our readers to stimulate interest and to be prepared to help us to develop decent, dignified care for the Pennsylvanians who are milling around the State, and for people from other states who require our assistance. It must not be forgotten that Pennsylvanians are to be found in 47 other states. We are asking Pennsylvania to do nothing more for the outlander than other states are doing for their citizens.

TRANSIENTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

(Continued from Page 1)

more likely to circulate through the internal towns and cities, sometimes constituting as high as 65 per cent of the total guests. (See table page 1)

Records made in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia of 25,000 transients over twelve and five month periods respectively form the basis of the accompanying tables. The table on age distribution shows that the youngest group follows closely the population census for Pennsylvania while the age group between 21 and 34 considerably exceed the nor-

mal and in the oldest group the percentage shows a marked decrease. This bears out the impression that the movement is predominately of youth. It is probable that one out of every seven transients is a boy under 21 years of age. About seven out of eight transients are likely to be native born Americans and one of five colored.

Registration by over 30,000 homeless men showed that for both the transient and the resident homeless groups, an average of 89 per cent were unmarried.

Their educational records show that the transient group have gone further in school and college and that they are probably more venturesome and are intellectually superior to the resident homeless group. In other words, facing this ultimate predicament of destitution, the more alert man takes to the road and actively seeks escape; the more sluggish man stays on and takes his punishment.

The transient is usually intelligent, rarely illiterate, oftener than not a young person, and susceptible to planning in cooperation with others for himself.

It is important to understand the content and character of this traveling population. Once they were the men who performed the seasonal labor of the country. Once they were the sailors and beet pickers and wheat harvesters and lumberman. Today they are also our next door neighbors who have found conditions at home unbearable and hope that somewhere in the world there must be work for them to do. They are the men who in all other depressions have gone out to push the frontier back until they pushed it into the Pacific Ocean. There are no more frontiers. Industry has discarded these men and will continue to discard them. Has America no other answer for them than the warning to pass on?

Transient Women and Families

Recent studies indicate a surprising growth in the number of women and girls on the road. Families offer an even more perplexing problem. They too, have taken to the highway. Except among crop workers, this country has never had nomadic families, but during recent years they have been known to drift from shore to shore and from Florida to the Lakes.

Conclusion

In spite of the large number of transients wandering about the State, they would not over tax the individual communities should there be some adequate machinery for their care. We have erected all sorts of barriers against them, legal, economic and the passive barrier of ignoring them. In Pittsburgh and Philadelphia the average daily load was 49 and 34 transient men and boys respectively last year. What was done with them? Pennsylvania followed the accepted custom of providing a night's lodging and a meal with the understanding that they move on the next day. Records show that 35 per cent of the transients passing through the State last year were legal residents of Pennsylvania. As such, they have rights in the State, and the law permits them more than the 24 hours usually accorded them.

A State program is manifestly needed which will integrate the vast functions of the State Emergency Relief Board with other important state departments and with individual county and community resources. Part of its program will need to be conditioned upon national financing to meet out-state transient requirements. This will make necessary an effort on the part of the various states to stimulate action in Federal legislation. In the meantime, however, special grants have been made by Washington to the Relief Boards of some states for special transient work and it may well be advised that Pennsylvania take steps to procure funds for such purposes.

COKE OVEN SQUATTERS

AN unusual squatter's town is described in a report from a field agent to the State Emergency Relief Board. A colony of 62 unemployed men have made themselves homes in some abandoned coke ovens in the southwestern part of the state. The field agent writes:

"It is a scene of utter desolation both within and without the make shift homes. There are perhaps 150 ovens in all. As many of them have been partially destroyed the effect is that of being in the wake of an earthquake.

"The ovens are circular, shaped like beehives, about eight feet in diameter and about six feet at the highest point sloping down to the circumference of the circle. The men have ingeniously connected doors and in some instances have made a connecting passage between two coke ovens, fitting up one room for sleeping and the other as living quarters. In most instances, the stoves are hand constructed from old tin found in the neighborhood. The only light is through a small hole in the top which in some instances is glassed over. Although there was a heavy rain and the day was cold, the ovens were warm and the stone floors did not seem to be damp. There were practically no furnishings other than one or two cots in each oven.

"Water is supplied from a lumber yard nearby. Several men had been washing their clothes. Before one oven a small tract of ground, 3 x 4 feet had been planted with a few flowers. One enterprising man had planted tomato and pepper plants in some small boxes which stood on the ledge in front of his oven. Another had a notice posted on his door announcing a sheriff sale of this home, which is the property of the Coke Company. The population was made up largely of foreigners; Czechoslovakian, Polish, and others who have been working for some years in the mines of County. There were several native born residents of the County and a scattering of negroes. A few of the men have been there two years, the majority for the last four or five months.

"A number of transients come and go spending from one night to a week. One of these was interviewed. His home was in Harrisburg and he had recently visited Pittsburgh to hunt for work. He was extremely emaciated. He had no bed in his abode and had slept the night before on a piece of cardboard on the stone floor of the coke oven. Nearly all the men stated they had no families although several of the foreigners said they had families in the 'old country.'

"About fifty of the men have dinner every day at Abbey and most of them, breakfast and supper also. Cards from a Catholic priest must be presented, although it is not necessary to be a Catholic. Several of the men said that they begged food in, the bakers especially being generous to them. One of the men questioned, was receiving State relief, \$5.00 a month.

"The spirit of the men was surprisingly good. They welcome visitors and are glad to have friendly contacts. They make little complaint. When directly questioned as to whether they liked living there, the inevitable answer was no. No one had a surly attitude and it was reported that few of them belong to the Unemployed Council. One man reported there was considerable drinking on the part of a few when they could secure even a nickel by doing odd jobs.

"Asked how they spent their time, several men replied: 'walking around.' Some were reading and they had been playing quoits with horseshoes. They were eager to have magazines sent to them."

WHERE LAST NIGHT WAS SPENT

By 18,065 Transients Registering with the Central Application Bureau of Pittsburgh

Hotel outside Pittsburgh	41
Hotel in Pittsburgh	316
Shelter outside Pittsburgh	8,626
Traveling	4,617
Box Car	1,688
Camp	51
Walking	480
Police Station	301
Railroad Station	110
Park	205
Others	1,630
Total	18,065

FORTY-SIX PER CENT UNEMPLOYMENT IN PHILA.

UNEMPLOYMENT in Philadelphia has increased from 10.4 per cent in April, 1929 to 46 per cent in April of this year according to a survey recently completed by the Industrial Research Department of the University of Pennsylvania in cooperation with the Service Committee for Professional and Business Women and the Technical Service Committee of the Engineers Clubs.

These findings have a direct bearing on the state problem of the transient and the homeless. They indicate that we can not hope for any immediate relief through the diversion of these men to gainful work.

The survey indicates that there was more unemployment at the beginning of April of this year than a year ago, and that part-time employment decreased slightly during the year.

In the sample areas of Philadelphia covered by the survey, 46.0 per cent of those usually gainfully employed were totally unemployed, 19.9 per cent were working part time, and the remaining 34.1 per cent were employed full time. Assuming the survey sample to be representative of the city, the survey results indicate that, of the estimated 908,000 gainful workers in the city, 417,500 were unemployed, 181,000 were employed part time, and 309,500 were employed full time as of April 1, 1933. These figures represent all persons in the city who are usually gainfully employed, including executive, professional and other groups among which there is but little employment.

Unemployment in Philadelphia Since April 1929

Date	Gainful Workers ¹		Unemployment	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
April 1929 ...	884,000	100.0	92,000	10.4
April 1930 ...	890,000	100.0	133,000	15.0
Dec. 1930 ² ...	894,000	100.0	223,000	24.9
Jan. 1931 ³ ...	894,500	100.0	247,000	27.7 ⁴
April 1931 ...	896,000	100.0	228,000	25.5
May 1932	902,500	100.0	359,000	39.8
Apr. 1, 1933 ..	908,000	100.0	417,500	46.0

¹Estimated for all dates, except April 1930.

²Survey conducted by Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

³Special United States Unemployment Census.

⁴Class A plus Class B.

NOTE—Full mimeographed copies of the Report on Transient and Homeless in Pennsylvania may be obtained free of charge by writing in to this office.

TRANSIENTS IN OUR MIDST

By *Bertha McCall*, General Director, N. A. of T. A. S.

ONE of the outstanding facts of this present industrial depression is the cropping up all over the country of a large transient population—a great drifting mass including whole families, single men and women, and hundreds of transient youth wandering aimlessly in search of work. They are not habitual transients. The emergency has caught them; they need constructive service to get them back to former stable ways of living.

So far as the problem of transiency is concerned the economic or emotional crisis in the family may result in a number of decisions. For instance, a father, rather than seek the relief offered in his community, decides to sell all that the family has and buys one of the 23,000,000 automobiles sold annually in our country, bundles the whole family into it and starts out in search of green pastures far away. Or, the father himself decides to relieve the family of his burden believing that it will get more relief if he leaves—sets out to find that job. Or, the young son, single, unattached, feels that he is the greatest burden when there are so many other mouths to feed, picks up and joins the great army of transient youth. Or, the oldest daughter seeing an advertisement that domestic help at \$15 per month is wanted in a large city, decides that she should take a chance hitch-hiking to that mecca and help the family. Or—and this does seem to be the last resort—the mother starts off to the city where domestic help is wanted while the father takes over the care of the family.

A transient is a human being, generally an American seeking an opportunity to live a decent independent life. It is just the same idea that made our forefathers seek this country of ours—but today there are no new countries and almost no frontiers. It does not seem, therefore, too idealistic to suggest that we accept responsibility for real service to transients in the community in which they happen to find themselves.

Today the transient, either individual or family group, may come into a community by passenger train, by freight, by bus, by automobile, or by hitch-hiking. Temporarily he needs food, shelter, may be medical care, but generally he asks only for food and a place to sleep. He may ask the owner of the filling station for help or a policeman, or he may stop at the minister's or the priest's door, or he may go to the municipal department, or he may ask Traveler's Aid, Salvation Army, Family Welfare, Y. W. C. A., Y. M. C. A. for assistance.

It is fundamental in any plan for the care of transients that the problem be considered on a community-wide basis. Many agencies are equipped to offer something toward the treatment of strangers in their midst, some have good case workers, some have excellent shelters, some are equipped to give food, some medical care and some transportation. Alone each can give only a part of the care—together they can present a real service. The secret of this community service will be in the measure that each agency interested and concerned becomes community-centered.

Since local planning represents only one approach to the problem it needs therefore to be integrated with state and national planning. This committee should be closely related to both the State Department of Public Welfare or the State Emergency Relief Commission and should include on its representation state organizations as well as representative from local organized and unorganized communities.

JUNGLES AND SHELTERS

WE are weary of facing depression emergencies. We have at least tried to provide milk for babies and shoes and food for school children and to care for pregnant women. By the time it came to the Homeless Man, it was likely to be devil take the hindmost.

A report of our casual neglect of these men comes from one of our larger industrial cities. It describes conditions which can be duplicated all over the State.

"Applicants at the shelter must give a short registration history, including name, age, address. A false name is frequently given because the applicant is ashamed of his plight. The first meal is usually a stew, dry bread and coffee. The stew though edible is not very palatable. The universal complaint is that it is seldom more than a thin soup and that the constant repetition becomes all but unbearable. Having had supper, the new applicant may sit around in a room on the first floor of the shelter. This "recreation" room has nothing to offer except a place to sit and talk—or brood.

"About 8:30 each night tickets for beds are issued. Nights when evangelistic services are held the retiring time is later. To a man, the lodgers who have been most bitter in complaining about other things have agreed that the beds are clean and comfortable. Nightgowns are provided and are frequently laundered. The men undress in the gymnasium room. They carry their clothing into the nearby shower-bath room where all clothing must be hung every night. This room is frequently, even nightly, subjected to the supposedly beneficial effects of burning sulphur candles for fumigation purposes.

"One of the complaints is that the man who stays at the shelter for several consecutive nights finds the sulphur candle has a disintegrating effect upon his clothing. Wherever the clothing may be moist the sulphur has a tendency to break down the fabric. Another and more emphatic complaint is that the sulphur candle does not kill vermin and therefore the practice of hanging all clothes in one room cause otherwise clean men to have their clothing infested with lice. While there has been much complaining on this score, specific instances of where an actual transfer of vermin is admitted, are lacking. There is, however, so much difference of opinion about the effectiveness of sulphur candles that the safest way would be either to change the rule about the clothing or adopt another and proven method of delousing.

"Bathing facilities are fairly adequate. Yellow soap, however, is used in common. Towels are frequently laundered. Due to the hanging of clothes in common in the shower room and the occasional need of a transient applicant taking a bath after the clothes have been so hung, the clothing is sometimes sprayed with water. It is further complained of that the practice of hanging clothes in the shower room lends itself to the possibility that a late applying transient may get by without a bath or fumigation. If he is carrying vermin and the sulphur candles work—all well and good. If the candles don't work—then it's not so good. In contrast to this, however, it is admitted that any well-behaved applicant may get permission during the day to bathe, shave, wash clothes or make use of any other facilities the shelter may have. The shelter serves two meals a day, breakfast and supper. Only one meal, breakfast is served on Sundays and on big holidays. Christmas for instance."

One young transient summed up the quiet resentment that many of them feel. "When the country goes to war who gets the first call for service? The single man. When the people need relief, who gets consideration last? The single man. Why?"